

# United States Senate

September 23, 2010

The Honorable John McHugh  
Secretary  
Department of the Army  
Room 3E700  
The Pentagon, 20310-0101

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I write to express my deep concern over this week's report by the *Washington Post* regarding Arlington National Cemetery's continuing interment problems. In particular, I seek your personal involvement to ensure that Montanans who contacted the Cemetery's hotline in recent months were provided correct information about the interment locations of their loved ones.

The Post's report raises new concerns about the quality of the reviews done by the call center established earlier this year to resolve family inquiries about the interments of their loved ones. During the Subcommittee on Contracting Oversight's July hearing on failures at Arlington National Cemetery, Ms. Kathryn Condon specifically touted the call center as the best way to resolve family member concerns. In response to this announcement, my staff recommended to several constituents that they contact the Army's hotline to verify that their loved ones were interred correctly. Today, the families who contacted the hotline are rightly worried that the information provided to them may not have been correct.

My constituents and all Americans expect and deserve certainty in confirming the locations of their loved ones' remains. Therefore, I request that you provide the following information as soon as possible:

1. How many Montana residents have contacted the call center since June 11, 2010?
2. How did Cemetery officials conclusively determine the accuracy of grave sites in these cases? What specific process was used? Were any of the charts used to verify the accuracy of these grave sites later determined to be inaccurate? In how many cases were errors found and how were those gravesite errors corrected?
3. Are there any inquiries raised by Montana residents that are still unresolved?
4. How many of the total number of calls – not simply Montana-based calls – have resulted in the discovery of a gravesite error. What means were used to investigate these inquiries and what assurances can you provide that all errors at Arlington have now been corrected?

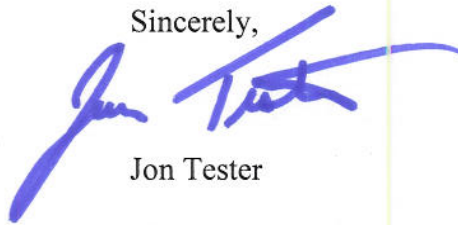
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5. What is the status of the Army's efforts to modernize the charting process, and when will it be complete? To what extent has the Army begun using geospatial imaging technology?
6. Based on news reports, it appears that several of the identified gravesite errors occurred in or as a result of inclement weather. How has the Army modified its procedures to prevent similar occurrences this winter?

As a member of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, I believe we have no greater responsibility than to honor our commitments to the men and women who serve our nation in the Armed Forces. Unfortunately, when it comes to the promise of a dignified interment, the Army fell short of its responsibility in far too many cases.

I know that you share my sadness and anger about this entire episode, and I applaud your commitment to making this right. I now look forward to learning more about your continued efforts to correct and finally end this sad and disgraceful chapter.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester